

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Serial No: 10/624,305)	Attorney
)	Docket Number: 200308790-1
Filed: July 22, 2003)	
)	Confirmation No.: 7802
Inventors: Tom Ruhe et al.)	
)	Group Art Unit: 2625
Title: Variable Support Structure and)	
Media Sheet Separator)	Examiner: Nguyen, Allen H.
)	

RESPONSE TO THE FINAL ACTION DATED APRIL 16, 2009

**The Continued Rejection Of Claims 12, 14, 16 and 17 Is Based On A
Plainly Wrong Interpretation of Olson**

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the remarks made in the Response To Arguments section of the final Action. As detailed below, however, these remarks highlight a misinterpretation of Olson that underlies the continuing rejection of Claim 12. The Examiner is urged to reconsider the rejection in view of the following remarks, so that both the Applicants and the Patent Office can avoid the time and expense of an unnecessary appeal.

Claim 12 recites a sheet separator that includes a span of flexible material and a plurality of supports supporting the span. The supports are oriented relative to one another such that the degree of resistance of the separator to the movement of sheets along the media path varies along the length of the separator from a greater resistance at an upstream part of the separator to a lesser resistance at a downstream part of the separator.

In Olson, by contrast, the difference between the lower frictional force surface region 40 and the higher frictional force surface region 42 is achieved by changing the composition of the surface at each region 40, 42, not by varying the orientation of underlying supports. The pertinent passages and figures from Olson are reproduced below – for clarity, part numbers 32 (resilient pad) and 36 (upstanding portions) are added to the excerpt from Olson Fig. 2 below and part numbers 36 (upstanding portions), 40 (lower friction surface region) and 42 (higher friction surface region) are